



BACKPACKS FOR MALAWI

Dear **Students & Families**,

Earlier this year I travelled to the African country of **Malawi** with an amazing organization called Dignitas International. Dignitas helps provide health care to kids and adults who are living with diseases such as HIV/AIDS.

While I was there, I spent a day at one of the clubs Dignitas established for kids and teens born with this disease. Once a month, these kids travel far and wide, sometimes walking for a day or two, to arrive at clinics all over the country where they are given their medicine for the following month. The kids also play dodgeball (I got hit right in the head!), cards, sing songs, dance, and lay on the floor drawing huge posters about their families and growing up. They are brave, strong, fun, and fantastic children.

Unfortunately, there is still a lot of discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS in Malawi. This club is their opportunity to learn more about how to have long and healthy lives and to spend time openly with other kids living with HIV. After their monthly meeting, these kids need to carry their medicine back home so they can take it daily to stay healthy. Because most of these kids have no backpacks to carry their medicine, they often lose it—or even hide it in bushes outside the school so the other kids can't see it.

The folks at Dignitas told me they would love a variety of backpacks so the children can carry their books and medicine to school safely and privately. It is important that these bags look unique (so the kids aren't all carrying the same "medicine bag"), and this is why we are reaching out for donations of real bags. Malawi is a very poor country. Most of the families Dignitas works with can't afford to buy backpacks for their children.

There will be a donation box set up at your school until **Friday, Oct. 9** (please see the posted signs for your school's box location). The backpacks can be big or small, used or new, for kids or adults. Before donating them, please give them a quick shake to make sure they are empty.

Kids and families at other schools in the neighbourhood are also helping collect backpacks. Let's show the children of Malawi how much we care. If you have any questions, please contact Tyler Clark Burke. Here's her email address: TCB@tylerclarkburke.com

Thank you!

Leslie Feist / www.listentofeist.com (click on **Causes**)



DIGNITAS